

ARGUMENT AGAINST PROPOSITION 84

(Ballot Title: Water Quality, Safety and Supply, Flood Control, Natural Resource Protection, Park Improvements, Bonds, Initiative Statute.)

This measure should have been titled the “Special-Interest-Hidden-Agenda Bond” because it was placed on the ballot by special interests who don’t really want you to know where all your money is going to be squandered. Every special interest that helped get this boondoggle on the ballot will get a share of the taxpayers’ money, but ordinary taxpayers will get nothing from this bond but higher taxes for the next three decades.

This so-called “water bond” has no funding for dams or water storage! The authors set aside billions for bureaucratic studies, unnecessary protections for rats and weeds, and other frivolous projects, but they couldn’t find a single penny to build freshwater storage for our state’s growing population. You have to read the text to believe it.

Only a very small portion of the funds from this enormous bond would be available for repair and maintenance of our levees, but Proposition 1E was placed on the ballot by the Legislature to provide \$4,090,000,000 for these same levees. Common sense dictates that we should wait to see how that money is spent before we authorize another \$5,388,000,000 in new spending. It would be foolish to lock permanent spending formulas in place, as this initiative seeks to do, when we have no idea what our future needs will be once the funds from Proposition 1E are spent.

This bond represents a huge tax increase. The proponents seem eager to avoid this unpleasant fact, but voters need to understand that bond repayment

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takes priority over all other government spending. Once issued, bonds cannot be cancelled, repudiated, or discharged in bankruptcy; they can only be repaid with tax revenues. Our state already has a \$7 billion budget deficit and there is no way to pay for this gigantic bond without higher taxes.

Local projects should be funded at the local level. This statewide bond is designed to force people in one part of the state to pay for local projects on the other side of the state. Why should people in Redding pay for urban parks in San Diego? Why tax people in Los Angeles to pay for beetle habitat restoration in Sutter County? This is poor tax policy and it was clearly designed to benefit the special interests that put this measure on the ballot. We should expect local communities to fund their own local parks and improvements; statewide bonds should be reserved for state parks, colleges, and other capital projects that benefit the whole state.

What is worse, this bond allows un-elected, unaccountable state bureaucrats to spend billions of dollars, with little or no real public oversight. Sacramento bureaucrats and special interests will love having a slush fund that they can spend without the need for public hearings and public votes in the Legislature — but we cannot allow that to happen.

Please join me in voting NO on Proposition 84.

Bill Leonard, Member
California State Board of Equalization

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